

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00

EB-07 H-02 INR-07 IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00

SP-02 OC-06 PRS-01 SS-15 USIE-00 USSS-00 SY-05 FAA-00

WRD-01 MCT-01 SSO-00 INRE-00 SCA-01 VO-03 INSE-00

SCS-03 PPT-01 /099 W

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O 120730Z SEP 76

FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1005

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LAHORE 1162

ROME FOR FAA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CIVAIR, IN, PK

SUBJECT: ANATOMY OF A HIJACKING

REF: LAHORE 1161 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: INDIAN AIRLINES HIJACKING SO FAR REMAINS A MYSTERY. NO MOTIVE HAS BEEN CLEARLY ESTABLISHED AND NO POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION MADE OF HIJACKERS THAT WE ARE AWARE OF. CAREFUL QUESTIONING OF EYEWITNESSES HAS PRODUCED NO POSITIVE LEADS. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES, IF THEY KNOW ANYTHING, ARE KEEPING IT QUIET. PAKISTANI AND INDIAN OFFICIALS COOPERATED CLOSELY DURING HIJACKING AND APPEAR ANXIOUS TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION. PEACEFUL SURRENDER OF HIJACKERS, CONFIDENTIAL

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WITH NO LOSS OF LIFE OR DAMAGE TO AIRCRAFT, EASED TENSIONS

AND SHOULD ENABLE BOTH SIDES TO SORT OUT FEW REMAINING PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING IS STORY OF HIJACKING WE HAVE PIECED TOGETHER FROM TALKS WITH EYEWITNESSES ON BOARD AIRCRAFT, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, POLICE, NEWSMEN, AIRLINE PERSONNEL, FOREIGN DIPLOMATS AND OTHERS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENT. OVERWHELMING IMPRESSION GAINED FROM FOREGOING SOURCES IS THAT HIJACKING SO FAR REMAINS A NEAR COMPLETE MYSTERY. EVERYONE WE TALKED TO SAID SIX INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED ARE MOST LIKELY INDIAN KASHMIRIS, BUT COULD OFFER NO FURTHER DETAILS. EYEWITNESSES ON PLANE SAID HIJACKERS NEVER REVEALED IDENTITY. INDIAN PASSENGERS AGREED SIX SPOKE HINDUSTANI WITH KASHMIRI ACCENTS AND LOOKED LIKE KASHMIRIS. LEADER OF GANG, NICKNAMED "THE MONK" BY SOME PASSENGERS BECAUSE OF HIS LONG GREASY BLACK HAIR AND FULL BEARD, WAS DESCRIBED AS ABOUT 35, MEDIUM HEIGHT, THIN, WITH LIGHT COMPLEXION AND LIGHT COLORED EYES. OTHER FIVE APPEARED MUCH YOUNGER, AROUND 25. ALL WERE NERVOUS, AND CARRIED OUT HIJACKING IN AMATEURISH FASHION.

3. HIJACK ATTEMPT TOOK PLACE SHORTLY AFTER INDIAN AIRLINES FLIGHT IC-491 LEFT NEW DELHI FOR JAIPUR, BOMBAY AND AURANGABAD AROUND 0800 (INDIAN STANDARD TIME) SEPTEMBER 10. FLIGHT HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO LEAVE 0700, BUT WAS DELAYED. ACCORDING TO EYEWITNESS REPORTS, PLANE HAD BEEN AIRBORN FOR ABOUT TEN MINUTES WHEN SIX HIJACKERS GOT UP TOGETHER -- THREE WERE SEATED TOGETHER IN ROW 5 NEAR FRONT, TWO BEHIND THEM IN ROW 6 AND ONE OTHER SOMEWHERE TOWARD REAR OF PLANE -- BRANDISHING TWO HAND GRENADES, SOME CARTRIDGES AND WHAT APPEARED TO BE A LARGE PERCUSSION-TYPE PISTOL. "THE MONK," WHO CARRIED PISTOL, IMMEDIATELY ENTERED COCKPIT WITH A SECOND HIJACKER WHILE OTHERS SOUGHT TO GAIN CONTROL OF CABIN AREA. FOLLOWING COMMOTION UP FRONT, "THE MONK" EMERGED FIVE MINUTES LATER WITH CAPTAIN OF PLANE AND LED HIM TO REAR OF CABIN. SHOUTING AND SCREAMING IN HINDUSTANI, HE COWED PASSENGERS AND QUICKLY ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS HIJACK LEADER. AT THIS POINT PLANE SHUDDERED UNACCOUNTABLY IN MID-AIR AND NUMBER OF PASSENGERS GROWING MORE FEARFUL BEGAN WEEPING AND CRYING ALOUD. FOR MANY, THIS PROVED TO BE MOST FRIGHTENING MOMENT OF ENTIRE HIJACK EPISODE. CO-PILOT QUICKLY BROUGHT AIRCRAFT UNDER

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CONTROL AND ABOUT A HALF HOUR LATER MADE A PERFECT LANDING AT LAHORE (ABOUT 0815 LOCAL TIME). PILOT CLAIMED HIJACKERS ORIGINALLY ASKED HIM TO FLY TO KARACHI. HE TOLD THEM HE DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH FUEL AND LAHORE WAS SELECTED AS ALTERNATE. PASSENGERS WERE NOT INFORMED OF DESTINATION, BUT SEVERAL WERE ABLE TO IDENTIFY CITY WHILE PLANE CIRCLED TO LAND.

4. ONCE ON GROUND, PLANE WAS SURROUNDED BY ARMED GUARDS

OFF MAIN RUNWAY NEAR MIDDLE OF FIELD AND BARGAINING PROCESS BEGAN. "THE MONK" MET WITH GOVERNMENT NEGOTIATORS -- COMMISSIONER LAHORE DIVISION FIGURED PROMINENTLY AS GO-BETWEEN -- OUTSIDE ON TARMAC AND ASKED FOR FOOD AND FUEL SO PLANE COULD TAKE OFF FOR JIDDA AND LIBYA, ONLY DEMANDS HIJACKERS REPORTEDLY MADE. PAKS AGREED TO PROVIDE FUEL AND FOOD REQUIRED, BUT WAITED UNTIL AROUND MIDDAY TO LOAD THEM ON BOARD. A FURTHER SERIES OF SUCCESSFUL STALLING TACTICS INVOLVING PROVISION OF AIR CHARTS AND CAPTAIN'S DEMAND FOR A NAVIGATOR KILLED MORE TIME. NEGOTIATIONS WITH CONCERNED FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS WERE AN ADDITIONAL FACTOR -- BY EARLY SATURDAY EVENING WE WERE ABLE TO REPORT TO PAK AUTHORITIES VIA THE EMBASSY IN ISLAMABAD THAT THE SAUDIS HAD REFUSED TO GRANT PERMISSION FOR HIJACKERS TO LAND.

5. WHEN DARKNESS FELL, HIJACKERS DECIDED TO POSTPONE TAKEOFF TILL FOLLOWING DAY. SMALL GROUPS OF PASSENGERS WERE SUBSEQUENTLY ALLOWED TO GET DOWN FROM AIRCRAFT FOR A FEW MINUTES AT A TIME TO GET FRESH AIR. INCREDIBLY, THREE MEN WERE ABLE TO MAKE A CLEAN GETAWAY ABOUT 2300 HOURS, BUT WERE FORCED TO RETURN TO PLANE BY PAKISTANI GUARDS WHO FEARED, PERHAPS RIGHTLY, THAT REPRISALS MIGHT RESULT. ABOUT 0030 SEPTEMBER 11, HIJACKERS, APPARENTLY WORN DOWN BY DELAYING TACTICS, AGREED TO LET PASSENGERS AND CREW LEAVE PLANE. NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUED FOR ANOTHER THREE AND HALF HOURS FOLLOWING WHICH HIJACKERS SURRENDERED WITHOUT A STRUGGLE. PILOT SAID DRUGGED WATER WAS USED TO WEAKEN THEIR RESISTANCE, BUT THIS HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED.

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00

EB-07 H-02 INR-07 IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00

SP-02 OC-06 PRS-01 SS-15 USIE-00 USSS-00 SY-05 FAA-00

WRD-01 MCT-01 SSO-00 INRE-00 SCA-01 VO-03 INSE-00

SCS-03 PPT-01 /099 W

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O 120730Z SEP 76
FM AMCONSUL LAHORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1006
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LAHORE 1162

6. SIX HIJACKERS ACTED NON-POLITICALLY THROUGHOUT. THEY MADE NO DEMANDS FOR MONEY OR RELEASE OF PRISONERS. NOR DID THEY CRITICIZE INDIAN OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT. (GULAB SINGH SHAKTAWAT, DEPUTY MINISTER, INDIAN STATE OF RAJASTHAN, WAS ON BOARD, BUT HIJACKERS EITHER TOOK NO NOTICE OR DIDN'T CARE.) THEY WERE CAREFUL NOT TO HARM PASSENGERS -- EARLY IN HIJACKING "THE MONK" ANNOUNCED TO ALL ON BOARD THAT HE WOULD SHOOT ANY OF HIS MEN WHO ROBBED PASSENGERS OR MOLESTED THEM IN ANY WAY. CONTRARY TO PREVIOUS INFORMATION, AIR CONDITIONING WAS KEPT ON MOST OF TIME. THERE WERE FREQUENT PERIODS OF RELAXATION DURING WHICH PASSENGERS WERE ALLOWED TO USE REST-ROOMS AND WALK AROUND A BIT INSIDE PLANE. GROUP OF ABOUT TEN WESTERNERS PLUS THREE INDIANS COVERTLY ARRANGED A LAST DITCH RESISTANCE EFFORT (CO-PILOT WAS REPORTEDLY PART OF GROUP), BUT NEVER FELT NEED TO CARRY IT OUT. OPINION OF MOST PASSENGERS WAS THAT HIJACKERS WERE NOT INTENT ON DO-CONFIDENTIAL

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OR-DIE MISSION.

7. PAK ADDITIONAL FOREIGN SECRETARY SHAHNAWAZ ARRIVED AT LAHORE LATE SATURDAY AFTERNOON AND TOOK CHARGE OF NEGOTIATIONS. INTERNATIONAL RADIO REPORTS CARRIED STORY THAT PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO WAS AT LAHORE, BUT THIS IS FALSE. PRIMIN WAS ON HIS WAY TO MULTAN IN PUNJAB PROVINCE AND NEVER CAME TO LAHORE. CHIEF MINISTER, WHO EARLIER HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS, LEFT LAHORE AROUND NOON TO MEET HIM. CHIEF SECRETARY (PUNJAB) TOOK OVER UNTIL SHAHNAWAZ ARRIVED.

8. INDIAN EMBASSY OFFICIALS BEGAN TO REACH LAHORE AROUND MIDDAY AND WORKED CLOSELY WITH PAK AUTHORITIES. HIJACKERS, HOWEVER, REFUSED TO TALK TO THEM. AMBASSADOR BAJPAI CAME IN LATE AFTERNOON AND WAS IN CLOSE TOUCH AT ALL TIMES WITH SHAHNAWAZ. WHEN LATTER ANNOUNCED ABOUT 0400 HOURS SATURDAY MORNING THAT HIJACKERS HAD SURRENDERED, THE TWO MEN EMBRACED WARMLY. BAJPAI IMMEDIATELY ASKED WHERE HIJACKERS WERE. SHAHNAWAZ TOLD HIM THAT THEY WERE IN PAKISTANI CUSTODY AND THE TWO AGREED THAT THEY COULD DISCUSS THIS

LATER.

8. WEST GERMAN EMBASSY HAD TWO OFFICERS ON SCENE IN ADDITION TO HONORARY CONSUL. ALL THREE WERE MOST HELPFUL IN SHARING INFORMATION, AS WAS IRANIAN CONSUL GENERAL. LIBYAN AMBASSADOR APPEARED BRIEFLY AROUND MIDNIGHT AND MET SHAHNAWAZ, BUT LEFT SHORTLY THEREAFTER. THIS SPARKED FURTHER RUMORS THAT SOME OF THE HIJACKERS MIGHT BE LIBYANS. WE WERE UNABLE TO TALK TO THE AMBASSADOR, BUT EVIDENCE FROM OTHER SOURCES IDENTIFYING HIJACKERS AS KASHMIRIS LEADS US TO DISCOUNT THIS THEORY IN SPITE FACT HIJACKERS SEEMED INTENT ON GOING TO LIBYA. WE DON'T KNOW IF LIBYAN GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARED TO LET THEM LAND THERE.

9. SECURITY AROUND AIRPORT DURING HIJACKING VARIED FROM INTENSE TO NON-EXISTENT. WHEN PLANE FIRST LANDED, ALL ACCESS TO FIELD WAS STOPPED AND TOP PAK AUTHORITIES COULD ONLY BE REACHED THROUGH A BEWILDERING SERIES OF INTERMEDIARIES. IT WAS EARLY EVENING BEFORE VIP LOUNGE IN OLD TOWER BUILDING WAS MADE AVAILABLE FOR FOREIGN DIPLOMATS. PAKISTAN INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES STAFF AND AIRPORT MANAGER PROVED TO CONFIDENTIAL

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BE MOST USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WERE EITHER TIGHT-LIPPED OR RELUCTANT TO SHARE INFORMATION. SHORTLY AFTER HIJACKERS SURRENDERED A MOST ASTONISHING BREACH OF SECURITY OCCURRED WHEN ENTRANCE TO DEPARTURE LOUNGE IN MAIN TERMINAL WHERE FREED PASSENGERS WERE BEING HELD WAS LEFT TOTALLY UNGUARDED. IT WAS SOME MINUTES BEFORE ADEQUATE SECURITY WAS RESTORED.

10. LACK OF COORDINATION BETWEEN SECURITY FORCES AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS COMPLICATED ARRANGEMENTS FOR GREGORY SPINNER, AMERICAN CITIZEN ON BOARD HIJACKED PLANE, TO STAY IN LAHORE. COMMISSIONER LAHORE DIVISION HAD TO INTERVENE AT LAST MINUTE AT INSISTENCE OF CONSUL-IN-CHARGE TO SET THINGS RIGHT DESPITE FACT SHAHNAWAZ HAD EARLIER PROMISED NON-INDIAN PASSENGERS THAT THEY COULD REMAIN IN LAHORE IF THEY WISHED TO. WEST GERMANS HAD SIMILAR DIFFICULTIES WITH THREE OF THEIR NATIONALS, BUT FINALLY SUCCEEDED IN ARRANGING FOR THEM TO STAY ALSO.

11. PAK POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES ARE UNHAPPY THAT HIJACKED PASSENGERS AND CREW WERE ALLOWED TO LEAVE FOR NEW DELHI BEFORE THEY HAD ADEQUATE TIME TO QUESTION THEM, BUT THIS IS UNDERSTANDABLE. AIRCRAFT'S RETURN WAS HELD UP FOLLOWING A REPORT THAT A THIRD HAND GRENADE MIGHT BE ON BOARD, NECESSITATING AN "INQUIRY." INDIANS APPARENTLY DID NOT OBJECT, AND QUICKLY ARRANGED FOR A SECOND PLANE TO TAKE PASSENGERS BACK TO NEW DELHI. LATEST INFORMATION IS THAT HIJACKED AIR-

CRAFT MAY BE ALLOWED TO RETURN SEPTEMBER 13.

12. DESPITE AIR OF MYSTERY SURROUNDING HIJACKING, A CONFRONTATION HAS BEEN AVOIDED. PRESENCE OF DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION ON BOTH SIDES, ONLY RECENTLY RESTORED, PAID OFF IN SMOOTH WAY INCIDENT WAS HANDLED. GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED PAKISTAN TIMES SEPTEMBER 11 CARRIED STORY ON FRONTPAGE, BUT SHIED AWAY FROM ANYTHING CRITICAL OF INDIAN GOVERNMENT. HIJACKERS WERE DESCRIBED AS "CLAIMING TO BE INDIAN NATIONALS;" PICTURE OF AIRCRAFT WAS RELEGATED TO BACK PAGE. BARRING UNFORESEEN DIFFICULTIES OVER RETURN OF PLANE AND PROSECUTION OF HIJACKERS, CURRENT WARMING TREND IN INDO-PAK RELATIONS SHOULD NOT BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED. EMBASSY MAY WISH COMMENT SEPARATELY.
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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
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04 MAY 2006

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